

Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group
Summary Meeting minutes
January 9, 2003

Members present: Wilma Bell, Rev. Rodney Davis, Merion Green, Fran Hawkins, Berneice Howard, Linda Martin, Tolu Odunlami, Anita Summerour

Interested Parties: Bess Corbin, Reginald Yirenkyi

Staff: Mayra Bayonet, Randy Clay, Pam Rowe, Jim Wasilak

Opening Remarks/Administrative Items

Chairman Tolu Odunlami opened the meeting, wished everyone a happy new year, and expressed his gratitude to everyone working on the neighborhood plan. The agenda for the meeting is an environmental presentation and a review of the revised schedule. Jim Wasilak asked for comments on the December 12 meeting minutes, and noted that the December 12 Decision Summary would be a topic of discussion at the end of the meeting. Some changes were made to the schedule based on when the guest speakers can attend. The Group also needs to discuss a date for another joint meeting with East Rockville.

Environmental Presentation

Jim Wasilak introduced Pam Rowe, the City's environmental specialist. Pam will cover the environmental setting and issues that the Plan can address. There are three significant environmental features for the community: the urban tree canopy, which filters sunlight, air and runoff; parks and open space, which provide for recreation opportunities and wildlife habitat; and the tributary to Southlawn Branch of Rock Creek. The neighborhood is the headwaters of this tributary, and was a wetland. This is the reason for the drainage problem that residents have experienced. The branch becomes a channel that runs along North Horners Lane abutting the cemetery property. Two alternatives for dealing with the lack of flow in this channel are being considered. Opportunities for environmental enhancements include green building techniques that are more energy efficient and use of vacant properties.

Issue areas include the maintenance of the existing tree canopy, which constitutes an important visual buffer for the community. For example, if evergreen trees are desired as street trees, that would be a change from the Street Tree Master Plan. Adding to street trees may be difficult in some areas due to the narrow public rights-of-way. Another issue area is additional green space, and how these should be used. Uses can potentially be active and passive parkland, or recreation of wetlands. Transportation-related noise sources such as the Metro/railroad tracks can be mitigated, especially when new development occurs. Pollution prevention is critical, and there may be educational methods to make residents aware of water quality protection.

Pam discussed the alternatives for addressing the issue of the stream channel along North Horners Lane. Some benefits to keeping the channel open include recontouring the stream channel to allow the stream to flow properly, and the possibility for landscaping. The culvert

under North Horners does not allow this currently, causing the stagnant water problem. Wilma Bell asked why this wasn't done on the Dover Road side. Pam pointed out that the stream is open on the other side of Dover Road. Bess Corbin stated that the sewer pumping station installation was not done properly. Pam noted that one of her responsibilities now is to ensure that those types of installations are done correctly. A disadvantage of piping the channel is that the state of Maryland may not approve the piping. Wilma stated that the channel is a potential safety hazard and that the stream should be piped to avoid this. Berneice Howard asked which direction the water flowed, and Pam responded that it flowed toward Gude Drive. Pam pointed out that keeping a stream channel open could provide a link to the natural environment that is frequently lost in communities, as well as an educational opportunity. Wilma expressed skepticism that the installation would be done properly, given past experiences. Pam also noted that a piped channel could increase the speed of the water flow downstream and lead to more erosion. Berneice stated that fences along streams can provide safety, and that the stream should be exposed as it was intended to be.

Pam discussed the public stormdrain project that some residents have participated in, which should be starting up the next phase. Pam showed one method of dealing with surface runoff called rain gardens, which provides a landscaped area that is designed to help drainage. Another option is to design wetlands and plant certain trees to help drainage.

The Plan can also make recommendations on public education and outreach. The City has Environmental Guidelines, a Street Tree Master Plan and a Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance, which cover new development and public improvements. The neighborhood plan can make specific recommendations in this area. The City has a responsibility to improve the quality of runoff to protect streams draining to the Chesapeake Bay.

Pam also showed an example of a green building residential project, known as Takoma Village Cohousing located in Takoma Park, that is environmentally responsible. Materials and building systems are efficient so the project consumes less energy. Bess Corbin asked about Chesapeake 2000, and Pam responded that this is an update of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement that requires removal of phosphates and reduction of sediment in Chesapeake Bay tributaries. Rockville has to monitor the runoff from the City's stormdrains for compliance. Pam noted that education is important so that improper items are not put into the stormdrains. Controlling pet waste is also a concern. The Rockville Commission for the Environment is looking at sustainability issues, with an environmental component, and including reduction of energy consumption and air pollution.

Wilma pointed out that maintaining trees can be a prohibitive expense for many homeowners. The Plan can offer some education for residents so that less expensive types of trees for maintenance can be planted. Wilma stated that there should be some mechanism for helping residents deal with older trees that are not in good condition, and Pam suggested that Lincoln Park could be a model for this. Merion Green pointed out that the sidewalks are so close to the street edge in Lincoln Park that it is impossible to plant street trees in many areas. Pam sees an opportunity to increase the tree canopy on private property to overcome this. Merion pointed out that many trees in the front yard are on private property. New trees should be species that homeowners can maintain. Merion stated that trees were not a good feature in front yards, and

the neighborhood did not need street trees. Several members of the Group disagreed. Pam will provide some suggestions on appropriate street trees.

Pam asked whether issues and recommendations were appropriate for incorporating into the Neighborhood Plan. Wilma stated that there should not be a bubbling brook at the stream channel, while Anita Summerour agreed with Berneice Howard that the stream should remain uncovered. The stream can be designed to flow correctly. The City Manager will make the decision as to what will be applied for. Wilma stated that this is not the appropriate location, given the green tank, and that it seems that this is a convenience rather than a necessity. The deciding factor will be how the permit will be received by the state. Another advantage of an open channel is that during pollution events, the source can be determined much earlier than in a pipe. Wilma expressed that the reduced cost of the open stream is too much of a factor, similar to the Watts Branch sewer issue. Jim pointed out that no matter which alternative is constructed, the problems that have been caused will be solved. Wilma noted that the stream attracts kids. Tolu expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to learn the history of the neighborhood, and invited everyone to walk on Johnson Drive after the meeting.

[Note: The environmental handout that was distributed at the meeting is attached.]

Discussion of Decision Summary and Future Schedule

Jim pointed out that the Decision Summary includes all of the decisions that the Advisory Group has made during their work, as well as some of the discussion points that the Group has weighed in on. Wilma felt that the statement regarding elderly housing on the MCPS property is somewhat misleading, and should be clarified that the potential elderly housing units should be integrated into the development if they are provided. She also suggested that concerns about institutional uses should come across as a clear issue for the neighborhood, and Jim suggested that it should also be clear that institutional uses are not appropriate in redevelopment areas. Linda Martin asked that the December 12 minutes be changed on page 3 to read that Rockville Reports would also be one of the methods of publicity. She also asked that changes be made to Page 4 regarding the Community Meeting notification to include mailed postcards, as well as listings in Rockville Reports and the Rockville *Gazette*.

Wilma stated that there should be a mention in the Plan about traffic on Dover Road both in the City and County. Jim responded that there will be upcoming discussions on transportation, but this could be added to the objectives. Fran Hawkins asked whether Dover Road could be made one-way, and Jim responded that many of these issues will be addressed by the traffic study that Lincoln Park and East Rockville have requested. Linda reiterated that the weight limitations on Horners Lane should be enforced. Berneice asked whether Dover Road crosses Gude Drive, and Jim responded that this would be a driveway to serve the building, which will contain building and construction related businesses. Jim suggested that the entrance could be configured to only allow exiting vehicles to turn left or right on Gude Drive, rather than coming straight across Gude Drive to Dover Road. This is complicated by the fact that Dover Road is built to industrial road standards so that it can handle trucks.

Johnson Drive was discussed and it was determined that the Mayor and Council should be asked to pave it during the budget cycle. Merion suggested that something should be done about the crushed run and the potential for asbestos. Wilma stated that the City was going to pave the street several years ago, but several residents felt that the street should be retained as it was. If the road becomes public, it becomes difficult to control who parks on the road, so it may be preferable to keep it as a private street. Pam agreed to find out about the crushed run.

Fran and Wilma suggested that the Plan should also recommend adding another "s" to Douglas Avenue, since the streets were named after Frederick Douglass. Jim noted that the Planning Commission has responsibility for naming Rockville's streets.

Linda asked whether a summary of the Plan would be available for the community meeting. Jim said that the draft Plan would be available at the Community Meeting, and that there could be an Executive Summary available as well. Wilma suggested that there should be another joint meeting with East Rockville so that Lincoln Park can present its recommendations to that group. At the final meeting after the Community Meeting, the Advisory Group would essentially certify the Plan, after having heard the feedback at the Community Meeting. There is a statutory 60-day period after the Plan is certified and prior to the first public hearing, which is held by the Planning Commission. The Mayor and Council will also hold a subsequent public hearing. The Planning Commission would hear testimony from the community, and perhaps make changes to the Plan. What is uncertain is how many changes the Planning Commission would make. The Mayor and Council would hold a public hearing on the Planning Commission-recommended draft and hold subsequent worksessions before adopting the Plan. The Group agreed that the Plan should be presented to the Mayor and Council in advance of the public hearings. Pam suggested that there can be display panels at the Community Center or at City Hall so residents can learn more about it.

Jim noted that Park and Planning is still reviewing the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan, which contains recommendations for the WINX property on Ashley Avenue. The City is continuing to monitor this process to make sure the recommendations are compatible with the Lincoln Park Plan. This property must be annexed into Rockville to receive sewer and water service.

Pam expressed an interest in observing the drainage problem herself, and will be setting up a time to do so. Wilma stated that there is a large amount of water that flows on Lincoln Avenue.

Jim asked about prospective dates for a meeting with East Rockville, and it might make sense to meet before the East Rockville community meeting. Wilma suggested that Lincoln Park needs to get through everything before meeting with East Rockville, which would mean that the meeting would be after the February 6 meeting.

The Group reviewed the planning area boundaries that had been previously decided. The Group clarified the boundaries on Stonestreet Avenue and along North Horners Lane, and discussed how some areas had previously been in Lincoln Park but now were considered East Rockville or were industrial. Jim added that when the planning area boundaries were set, residential neighborhoods were separated from commercial and industrial areas.

Next Steps

The Group agreed that the next meeting would be on January 23 at the Lincoln Park Community Center.